

Output Document from the Parliamentary Roundtable¹

15th UN Internet Governance Forum

Tuesday, 10 November 2020

Building Trust in a time of COVID-19 response and post-COVID-19 recovery

The IGF 2019 Parliamentary Forum encouraged and recommended that national parliaments cooperate and exchange best practices for dealing with Internet-related public policy issues. The Berlin IGF's "[Jimmy Schulz Call](#)" called on parliaments from all parts of the world *to enhance international cooperation and the exchange of best practices among national parliaments to deal with Internet related public policy issues*². It was agreed that legislation must be reconsidered to address the challenges of the digital age, underlining the importance of engaging non-state actors, and respecting and protecting individual human rights and fundamental freedoms, as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)³.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made it clearer: The Internet is more critical than ever in maintaining basic economic processes, social interaction and a minimum of cultural life. This prioritises having meaningful access for all people, good digital policies and Internet governance, as well as ensuring trust in public officials and information. Yet the digital divide still exists and the COVID-19 pandemic has made this evident. Multilateralism and multistakeholder cooperation across sector sand at all levels is essential to tackle common challenges, not least the digital and gender divides, and to promote ICTs and the Internet for the benefit of all. In this regard, the cooperation of national parliaments through the enactment of legislation is critical.

Parliamentarians have a responsibility to actively contribute to creating legal frameworks for the current and next generations of Internet users which make the Internet accessible, open and safe for everyone. In these people-centred processes, parliaments must be guided by public trust, both in themselves as legislators and in the Internet itself.

The Internet is all-pervasive; it affects multiple aspects of our lives and has become normative for many people. Yet, despite people's growing dependency on it, many are among marginalized groups. Digital and gender-based divides must be addressed by all, including the parliamentarians, for the sake of everyone benefiting equally from the immense power digital technologies have for sustainable development. For those connected, safety and security online are not yet a norm. Beside the positive aspects, the cyberspace challenges us to deal with information overload, misinformation and disinformation. Increasingly, it is hard to distinguish truth from fiction or outright untruths. The World Health Organization has noted that this has created significant problems in fighting the

¹ The Parliamentary Roundtable at IGF 2020 was co-organized by UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, supported by the IGF Secretariat. This draft document was open for feedback, to participating parliamentarians; and the IGF Secretariat received inputs from Germany, Poland, the Russian Federation and the Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

² "Jimmy Schulz Call" https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/index.php?q=filedepot_download/7505/1807

³ Ibid.

pandemic, with an *'infodemic'* – an unprecedented overabundance of information (both accurate and false) – preventing people from accessing authoritative, reliable guidance about the virus.⁴

Centered on theme “Building Trust in a time of COVID-19 response and post-COVID-19 recovery”, the IGF 2020 Parliamentary Roundtable concluded on the following messages:

With reference to the Tunis Agenda of the UN World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS, 2005); UN Member States have confirmed that international law, as enshrined in the UN Charter (1945), guided by principles such as equity, ethics, non-discrimination, inclusiveness and fairness, human rights as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), are both relevant in the online domain; being guided by the United Nations Secretary-General’s Roadmap for Digital Cooperation (2020); referring to the work of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and taking note of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:

A: Public Trust in the Internet

Parliaments can contribute to improving public trust in the Internet by:

- promoting good practices of digital technologies supporting sustainable development to showcase the benefits that digital inclusion can bring to people, and to foster people’s trust in technologies.
- advocating for bringing meaningful access to all its people through multistakeholder partnerships and initiatives, and recognise the need for non-state stakeholders to observe principles, rules and norms for responsible behaviour online.

Given a rapidly growing strong integration of the Internet in people’s lives and the fact that online safety also depends on end-users’ skilful and informed behaviour, national parliaments can:

- encourage embedding digital literacy in formal educational curricula available to all citizens.

Misinformation and disinformation online are a systemic global problem and cannot be dealt with in a single legislative response. This problem requires a systemic approach, where all stakeholders, including legislators, would actively contribute to long-term awareness raising and facilitation of critical thinking among online population, online content creators and online platform owners. The IGF 2020 Roundtable advises all national parliaments to:

- take active participation in awareness raising and supporting capacity development on combating misinformation and disinformation online.

Cyberattacks and criminal online activities are undermining the security and safety of the Internet and need a collective response, which includes the promotion of confidence and capacity building measures as well as the strengthening of the resilience of the billions of Internet users. The IGF 2020 Parliamentary Roundtable advises all national parliaments:

- to promote a new culture of cybersecurity and comprehensive cyber-hygiene in the daily use of the Internet;

⁴ <https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/immunizing-the-public-against-misinformation>

- to promote the stability of cyberspace and its infrastructure by protecting, in particular, the public core of the Internet.

B: Public Trust in Parliamentarians

Trust is crucial to success in political life and the public builds an image of trustworthiness from their media consumption – both formal and informal.⁵ Parliaments and parliamentarians are using the Internet to increase public awareness, enhance their public image, help form and shape public opinion.⁶

The Internet is a place where parliaments can inform, educate and engage. However, disinformation and deliberate attempts to disrupt democratic processes are new realities and well reported. It is vital that parliaments and members understand the risks and challenges. They need the skills to manage their digital spaces safely and effectively if they are to maintain further advance public trust. The IGF 2020 Parliamentary Roundtable recommends that national parliaments:

- actively promote good practice on safe online behaviour for all.
- nurture the public image of parliaments through the social media citizens use to build familiarity and trust.
- encourage all parliaments to actively increase public exposure of their work through open data.
- engage more people in the work of parliaments through digital participation initiatives and multistakeholder dialogues, in particular with regard to legislation on Internet related public policy issues;
- enhance communication and consultation with the technical community on Internet related legislation to deepen the mutual understanding of the interlinkage of law and code making in the digital age;
- take pro-active steps to overcome the impact of disinformation and prevent the flow of misinformation through promoting open standards, open data, and awareness raising through multistakeholder engagement and by fostering inclusive digital literacy.

C: Open Discussion Discourse

Transparent, inclusive and multistakeholder continuous discussion on public digital policy matters is critical for advancing trust in digital technologies, introducing effective policies, but also fostering trust in the work of parliaments.

In light of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly the Sustainable Development Goal 9, and based on national development priorities and strategies of the countries to build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation and referring to the United Nations Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, the IGF 2020 Parliamentary Roundtable recommends that the Internet Governance Forum, as a bottom-up, open, inclusive, multistakeholder, non-commercial platform for facilitation of dialogue pertaining to Internet governance matters:

⁵ Chadwick, A. (2013). *The hybrid media system: Politics and power*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

⁶ Inter-parliamentary Union. (2018). [World e-Parliament Report 5th Edition](#). Geneva: IPU.

- introduces as a permanent practice an annual high-level segment and ministerial and parliamentary tracks, ensuring more actionable outcomes⁷.
 - promotes the formation of a permanent informal working group of Parliamentarians, aimed at facilitating the exchange of information and good practice experiences among members of national parliaments with regard to the preparation, adoption and implementation of legislation on Internet related public policy issues, through participation at the IGF, and to support concrete efforts to close the digital divide between developed and developing countries;
 - investigates the feasibility of the establishment of a global repository of national legislations on Internet related public policy issues and regulatory frameworks on the development and use of digital technologies.
-

Annex:

[List of parliamentarians who participated at the roundtable](#)

⁷ UN Secretary-General Roadmap for Digital Cooperation <https://undocs.org/A/74/821>